

THE REHEARSAL.

1. Doctor Coward his Blunder about Re-Creating.
2. How the Soul is Hid in God Explain'd.
3. The Doctor Argues as from Annihilation, so from Transmigration.
4. He mistakes the Answer to an Objection, for the Argument.
5. Why I go not through all the Texts he Quotes.
6. His Exposition of Eccles. iii. 3.

SATURDAY, May 17. 1707.

(1.) Country-m. **Y**OU told me when we Parted last time, Master, of a fine Stroke you had for me. Come I'm Ready, let's have it.

Rehearsal. It is in the place we were upon last of Dr. Coward his Farther Thoughts p. 35. where he says, If God Annihilates your Substantial Spirit, it is still in his Power to Re-Creat it, and in his Disposal to Re-Implant it in the Body or not---

Country-m. Hold, Hold, before you go further, I have a Word to put in here. If a thing be Annihilated, that is, Reduc'd to Nothing, isn't it? And I would Ask, whether ther are several sorts of Nothings? Is ther one Bigger, and another Less; one Better, and another Worse? If so, then Nothings are Somethings. But in our Country Logick, Nothing is Nothing. And when the Being of any thing is taken away, it is no more any thing, nor can it be call'd IT, that is, This or That, for then it wou'd be Something. And if ther were 1000 things Created, yet it Cannot be said, that This or That Nothing was Created. What is the Doctor's meaning then in saying Re-Created? For a thing can be Created but Once. Ther may be a new Creation, but not of the same thing, for when it is once Annihilated, it is Nothing. So that God may Create a new Soul, but that cannot be said to be any Soul that was Annihilated. For a 1000 Souls may be Annihilated, and which of them all is the New Soul that is Created? Thus if the Souls of all Men are Annihilated at their Death, as the Doctor supposes, and that ther will be a New Creation of Souls at the Resurrection, Which Soul belongs to which Body? Which is my Soul, and which is Yours? For None of these Souls was ever in a Body before. If a thing is to be Re-Produc'd, it must be Rept somewhere and Preserv'd not Annihilated or suffer'd wholly to Perish.

(2.) Reearf. Didn't he tell you, as I Quoted him in my last, that (our Life that is, our Soul) is Hid in God, till the Resurrection.

Country-m. And as I told you last time, he makes the Soul to be Nothing after Death, and says it wholly Perishes. And how is Nothing Hid in God? It is Easy to Hide Nothing, for it Hides it self from Every thing.

Rehearsal. But you must not Jest with this Expression, for they are the words of the Apostle, Col. iii. 3. For ye are Dead and your Life is hid with Christ in God.

Country-m. This was spoken of our Life and Conversation here in this World, as the words before shew, Set your Affections on things Above, and not on things on the Earth; for ye are Dead, &c. So being Dead to the Carnal Pleasures of the World, our Life and the Pleasures of it are Hid from the World, and are with Christ in God. As the same Apostle says in another place, Our Conversation is in Heaven. I hope you think this a very Different thing from the Interpretation the Doctor gives of this Text, to Hide our Souls, after Death, after they are Annihilated, and wholly Perished.

(3.) Rehearsal. That is true indeed, and your sense of this Text is Just. But let me go on. After this Supposal of Annihilation, he Proceeds to that of Transmigration, that is, That the Soul of a Man shou'd be put into a Beast. What then?

Country-m. Then that Beast wou'd be a Man. For it is not the Shape of the Body makes a Man. But what do's he make all these Supposes for?

(4.) Rehearsal. He Supposes too the Soul after Death to Sleep to the Resurrection, or Reside in the Concave of the Moon. And the End for which he brings in all this, is, That in all these Cases the Soul is in the Power and Disposal of God. And the Inference he makes from thence is, That you cannot Call this a Returning to God. If you do (Says he) then Certainly even the Beasts of the Field, &c. may be said to Return to God, (as I have before Quoted him) because they are at His disposal.

Country-m. The Doctor made an Objection against

against this Text Eccles. xii. 7. And says in his *Farther Thoughts*, p. 24. *Pray make Your Text explain how wicked Souls go to God.* To which the Answer was (as you have set it down) That tho' they could not be said to Return to His Favour, yet they Return'd to Him to be Judg'd by Him, and so Return'd into His Hands or Power.

The Doctor then immediately turns this Answer to him, as if it were an Argument brought to Prove that Souls do Return to God, because they are in His Power; And thence Infers that, by the same Reason, the Souls of Beasts, and every thing Else that is in the Power of God, may be said to Return to Him. Thus wilfully mistaking the Solving an Objection, for the Proof of the Argument. The Proof is in the Text which says, That the Soul returns to God who gave it. And the Doctor has made all this Work to get Rid of it, And in my Opinion, has Confirm'd it the more, by these sort of Objections he has Rais'd against it; the Prodigious Explications he has given of it; with the Contradictions he has Run into in Defending them.

(5.) *Rebearsf.* In like manner he Torments the other Texts he Pretends to Answer. Which if I should Propose to you in the Order as they Ly, I doubt not of your giving as good Answers as to the Former; but I'm afraid the World would grow weary of Us, and Cry out again, That we were Serious too Long together. Besides they may think the Work already sufficiently done. For one Text fully Proving the Point, is as Good as Twenty.

(6.) *Country-m.* Yet more give more Confirmation. And I would not Tyre our Auditors. But let me know if he says any thing to that other Text in Ecclesiastes, Chap. iii. 21. *Who knowest the Spirit of Man that goeth Upward and the Spirit of the Beast that goeth downward to the Earth?* Because this is much of the same Strain with that we have already Consider'd.

Rebearsf. He says, *Second Thoughts*, p. 276. 277. That this was only a Question, *Whither the Spirits of Men and Beasts go when they Die?* --- Demonstrating the great Difficulty of Comprehending what becomes of the Breath of Life, that God gave Man, when he Breaths it out and Dies.

Country-m. Was this Propos'd as so Great a Difficulty by Solomon? The Doctor cou'd have told him Presently! Why, it wholly Perishes, and ther's an End on't! And if it wholly Perishes, it is no where. What do you ask then Whither it go's?

But the Question here Ask'd seems to me, not to be *Whither the Spirit go's?* But *What it is?* *Who knoweth the Spirit of Man?* Its going Upward is taken for Granted, as a thing then well known, and Adds, to the Difficulty of knowing the Nature of the Spirit, which go's Upward when the Man Dies. As if I should say, who is that Man who Climbs so Steep a Hill? All the Question is about the Man, not at all about the Climbing. Tho' that may be the Occasion of my Question.

But in my Bible instead of that goeth Upward, it is put in the Margin, according to the Hebrew, that is Ascending, and then it is, *Who knoweth the Spirit of Man that is Ascending?* Which speaks of the Present time. That the Spirit of Man is Ascending and going Upward now in this Life, while it Remains in the Body. The meaning of which I take to be, in Meditation and Contemplation of Heavenly things: Whereas the Souls of Beasts go Downward, they think of Nothing but what is before them here Below. And the Spirit of Man which is Ascending while in the Body, after Death do's Return to God who Gave it. Thus these two Texts of Solomon Confirm and Explain each other.

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